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STATE OF IDAHO
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Mr. Tom Luna

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As Congress looks to modernize the e-rate formula, the State of Idaho believes in two overarching criteria: flexibility and simplicity.

The State of Idaho has used e-rate funds to their fullest potential, through creating the Idaho Education Network (IEN), which provides an intranet connection as well as video teleconferencing equipment to every public high school in the state. Idaho has many rural and remote areas of the state where all too often the quality of education is determined by geography. Because of the IEN, students can use video conferencing to visit the world in digital format. Students take virtual field trips to museums and countries that would otherwise not be possible. The IEN is also utilized closer to home as students take classes from districts sometimes a hundred miles away, and advanced courses that would not be possible in a student's home district. Students also are able to get a jump start on higher education. For instance, during the 2012-2013 school year, 3,353 Idaho high school students earned 7,351 credits in IEN interactive videoconference classrooms throughout the state. Of the total credits attained via the IEN, 66 percent were dual credits costing \$65 per credit hour, versus the average higher education tuition cost of \$153 per credit hour. This resulted in a savings was \$426,627 in tuition alone for parents, not including all the other savings associated with the cost of attending college.

In a 21st Century classroom that is not limited by bell schedules, walls or other physical constrictions, Idaho students have the opportunity to learn beyond the school day. Idaho students in K-12 have spent more than 30,000 hours solving complex mathematics problems on their own time through a web-based program called, "Think through Math." This program has shown that when students have the connectivity, they will use it to further their education. Unfortunately, today, the only opportunity a child has to extend learning into their home is if connectivity is available and if their family can afford it. If e-rate dollars were flexible to make connectivity for educational purposes possible in every home or on every school bus, more Idaho students could participate in a 21st century classroom, and every state could extend the school day to better meet students' needs. For these reasons, the Idaho State Department of Education supports modernizing e-rate to expand the entities that pay into e-rate while also how e-rate dollars can be used. We support reviewing regulations every three years to ensure they are keeping pace with the ever-changing technology.

In addition, Idaho supports making the application process for e-rate dollars as simple as possible for applications. We support simplifying the renewal process and setting up an alternate application process for consortia applications, like Idaho.

E-rate dollars have become a critical element to modernizing our country and our public education system. As rules and regulations are crafted to enhance the program, it is Idaho's goal to ensure they are as flexible and as simple as possible going forward so public schools can use this funding to best meet the needs of individual students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Luna", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Tom Luna
Superintendent of Public Instruction